

Protecting Reproductive Health

Information for Service Members and Families

Important Facts about Reproductive Health

- The Department of Defense is dedicated to protecting the health of all Service members and their families.
- Public health efforts are ongoing to identify and prevent potential reproductive health problems.
- Although much remains to be learned, there are ways you can help protect your reproductive health, even before pregnancy has occurred.

What is reproductive health?

Reproductive health includes the ability to conceive children (also known as fertility), have healthy full-term pregnancies, and healthy infants. The spectrum of reproductive health can also address sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and reproductive tract cancers. Both men and women can have reproductive health concerns, although there may be important differences in exposures of concern and health problems between men and women.

What can I do to protect my reproductive health?

Here are some measures that everyone, military and civilian, can take to protect their reproductive health:

Women:

- All women of childbearing age should take 400 mcg of folic acid (sometimes called Vitamin B-9 or folate) daily, even if not planning a pregnancy. Consuming adequate folic acid both before and during early pregnancy can reduce the risk of having an infant with certain birth defects, including neural tube defects (e.g., spina bifida). Folic acid is found in multivitamins, leafy green vegetables, citrus fruits, and fortified breads and cereals.
- If you are sexually active, protect yourself from STDs. Condoms can be an important part of this protection; most other birth control methods do not protect you from STDs. The surest way to avoid transmission of STDs is to abstain from sexual contact, or to be in a

long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested and is known to be uninfected.

- Ask your healthcare provider about a new vaccine to prevent human papilloma virus (HPV), a particular STD that is linked to cervical cancer.
- If you are sexually active, you should have a Pap test (screening for cervical cancer) and STD screening every year.
- If you are planning a pregnancy, discuss any potential reproductive health issues with a medical professional in advance, especially if you have a prior history of reproductive problems, a chronic medical condition, or your work requires regular occupational health screening for exposures to workplace hazards, such as radiation or industrial chemicals.
- If you are pregnant, think you are pregnant, or trying to become pregnant:
 - ✓ Do not smoke or drink alcohol.
 - ✓ If you are a Service member, ensure that an occupational history is completed by your medical treatment facility to assess your current potential exposure to workplace hazards.
 - ✓ Notify medical professionals before starting or stopping any medications or receiving vaccines.
- If you are ever uncertain about whether you are pregnant, assume that you are, and act accordingly until pregnancy is confirmed or not.
- If you discover that you inadvertently received vaccines during your pregnancy, especially the smallpox vaccine, or that you became pregnant shortly after receiving the vaccine, notify your healthcare provider immediately. You should also contact the National Smallpox Vaccine in Pregnancy



Visit the Deployment Health and Family Readiness Library: <http://deploymenthealthlibrary.fhp.osd.mil>

A collaborative effort between the Air Force Institute for Operational Health, the Deployment Health Clinical Center, Force Health Protection and Readiness, the Navy Environmental Health Center, the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine, and the OUSD(P&R)/Military Family and Community Policy

Registry at 619-553-9255, DSN 553-9255, or email NHRC-birthregistry@med.navy.mil for more information.

- If you discover that you are pregnant after deploying or think you have been exposed to any substance that may harm your pregnancy or infant, inform your command and medical professionals right away.

Men:

- If you are sexually active, protect yourself from STDs. Condoms can be an important part of this protection. If you think you had an exposure of concern, get tested for STDs. The surest way to avoid

transmission of STDs is to abstain from sexual contact, or to be in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested and is known to be uninfected.

- If your partner is pregnant or trying to become pregnant, do not smoke and reduce your consumption of alcohol.
- If you are trying to start a family and have concerns about your reproductive health, discuss these issues with your healthcare provider.

Where Do I Get More Information?

DoD Deployment Health Clinical Center (DHCC)

Phone: (866) 559-1627
<http://www.pdhealth.mil/>

U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (USACHPPM)

Phone: (800) 222-9698
<http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil>

Air Force Institute for Operational Health (AFIOH)

Phone: (888) 232-3764
<http://www.brooks.af.mil/afioh/>

DoD Force Health Protection and Readiness (FHP&R)

Phone: (800) 497-6261
<http://fhp.osd.mil>

Navy Environmental Health Center (NEHC)

Phone: (757) 953-0700
<http://www.nehc.med.navy.mil>

CDC National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/>

Other Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) resources

<http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/DRH/>

DoD Birth and Infant Health Registry*

Phone: 619-553-9255, DSN 553-9255
Email: NHRC-birthregistry@med.navy.mil
<http://www.nhrc.navy.mil/rsch/departement164/projects/birthdefects.htm>

*Note this is the same contact information for the National Smallpox Vaccine in Pregnancy Registry

National Institutes of Health (NIH) Center for the Evaluation of Risks to Human Reproduction

<http://cerhr.niehs.nih.gov/>



Your Suggestions: http://deploymenthealthlibrary.fhp.osd.mil/product_feedback.jsp

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